The Washington Herald Magazine of Features and Fiction

HOW THE STARS AND STRIPES OF THE FUTURE MAY LOOK

By Wayne Whipple

IT IS eminently fitting that on this Flag Day of 1921, which we observe next Tuesday, we should stop to consider what the flag of tomorrow will be. And we can best do this by considering for a moment the evolution of our national emblem from its inception with the birth of the Nation. Before we had a flag—even before we had a nation—the flag of the United Colonies was raised on a height in Cambridge across the river in plain sight of the British in Boston, on New Year's Day, 1776. On the 4th of January General Washington wrote to Joseph Reed, his secretary, who was then in Philadelphia:

"We are at length favored with a sight of His Majesty's most gracious speech, breathing sentiments of tenderness and compassion for his deluded American subjects. * * * The speech I send you.

The flag of the United Colonies was raised on a height in Cambridge across the river in plain sight of the British in Boston on New Year's Day, 1776

A volume of them was sent out by the Boston gentry, and, farcical enough, we gave great joy to them (the 'red-coats,' I mean) without knowing or intending it, for on that day, the day which gave being to our new army, but before the proclamation came to hand, we had hoisted the Union flag in compliment to the United Colonies. But behold, it was received in Boston as a token of the deep impression the speech had made on us, and as a signal of submission. So we learn by a person out of Boston last night. By this time I presume they think it strange that we have not made a formal surrender of our lives."

As some of the flags borne by the Americans showed a rattlesnake and the legend, "Don't Tread on Me!" the British naturally accepted the substitution of their Union Jack to mean that the "rebel rabble" had come to their senses and had raised the new flag to prove their loyalty. It was meant to show that the Colonies had joined together to fight for their rights as British subjects.

Some authorities state that General Washington got his idea for the five-pointed star in the first flag of the United States from the coat of arms of his ancestors in England. But royal arms and noble crests, just at that juncture of affairs, were signs of unfair privilege—the very things the people of the English Colonies in America were rising up against. Therefore, it would have been worse than foolish for the Revolutionary commander-in-chief to inject his family crest into the ensign of insurgency.

To make a rebel flag before Congress had declared for separation and independence required more than a skillful needle—a brave heart, a ready wit and a discreet tongue. To Betsy Ross, possessing all these, was granted the immortal honor of being chosen to make the first flag of the United States.

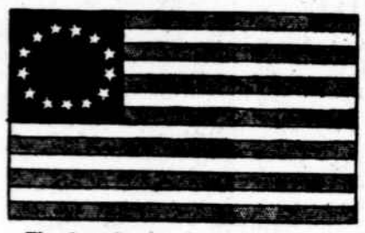
Washington's interpretation of the meaning of the flag he had designed not only refutes the assertion that he took the stars from his family crest, but it also reveals the real reason for altering the form of the star at Mrs. Ross' suggestion. In giving the meaning of the flag he designed, the commander-in-chief wrote:

> We take the star from Heaven, the rod from our Mother Country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty.

It is not strange that, in the excitement and turmoil of more vital matters during "times that try men's souls," the Continental Congress overlooked the formal adoption of the national standard for nearly a year. Attention seems to have been called to the oversight on or just before the 14th of June, 1777, for on that date this entry was made in the journal:

> RESOLVED, that the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; and the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.

IN THE first flags made after the adoption, according to Trumbull and Peale, the military painters of that day, the stars were set in a circle—either with thirteen in the circumference or twelve outside and a larger star in the center. As the flag was to be the ensign, not of a monarch or over-lord, but of the sovereign peiple, the widest possible latitude was allowed in the arrangement of the "new constellation"—the only fixed condition being that there should be thirteen. No American should consider thirteen an unlucky number.



The first flag of the United States, made by Betsy Ross and shown in Peale's painting of Washington Crossing the Delaware

In 1782, the year after the British surrender at Yorktown, Congress found occasion to adopt the great seal of the United States. In this the thirteen five-pointed stars were set in the form of a large British six-pointed star, as if in recognition of their English language and ancestry.

In 1795, as Vermont and Kentucky had come into the Union, Congress passed a resolution increasing both stars and stripes to fifteen; and although Tennessee, Ohio and Louisiana had been admitted to the Union before the War of 1812, the flag floating over Fort McHenry in September, 1814, was of the fifteen-star and fifteen-stripe kind and, in this particular instance, the stars were placed in three rows of five each.

It was an ensign of this exceptional arrangement which Francis Scott Key saw while a temporary prisoner on a British ship of war the night that he wrote "The Star Spangled Banner" during the unsuccessful attack of the British on Fort McHenry.

But the commonest flag from 1795 to 1818—the ensign under which most of the battles of the War of 1812 were fought—had a circle of ten stars, with five more placed outside in such a way as to arrange the whole fifteen in the form of a rude five-pointed star.

Significance of the arrangement of "the Flag of the Future": The thirteen stars in the central star stand for the thirteen original States—this design is from the seal of the United States, adopted in 1782; the twenty-five stars in circle, enlarged from Washington's design in 1776, represent the States added during the first century; while the ten stars in the loose outer circle represent States admitted since 1876. New stars to be inserted in this circle at equal intervals

THIS design evidently suggested to Captain Samuel Chester Reid the idea of setting all the stars in an exact five-pointed star. In 1818 Indiana and Mississippi had been admitted, increasing the stars to twenty. Securing the co-operation of Peter H. Wendover, a member of Congress from New York City, Captain Reid agitated the question of a fixed arrangement for the stars in the flag. But Congress saw that the addition of other stars to the twenty shown in the captain's design would soon render a regular five-pointed setting impossible. So it passed the act, which President Monroe signed on April 4, 1818, declaring "that from and after the fourth day of July, 1818, the flag of the United States be thirteen horizontal stripes, alternate red and white; that the union have twenty stars, white in a blue field, and that on the admission of every new State into the Union, one star be added to the union of the flag; and that such addition shall take effect on the Fourth of July succeeding such admission."

By this act Congress went to the opposite extreme, giving infinite latitude in the star arrangement—even more than that implied by "representing a new constellation" in the original resolution adopting the flag.

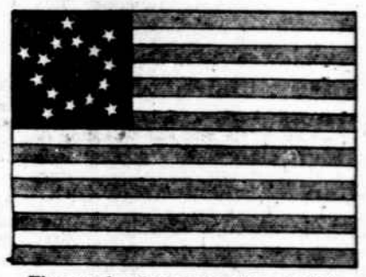
The admission, within three years from the final Flag Act of Congress, of Illinois, Alabama, Maine and Missouri, proved the decision to have been justified, for those four stars would have broken up Captain Reid's design. Then it was fifteen years before another State came in; but in the fourteen years following that, seven—Arkansas, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Iowa, Wisconsin and California—were added. After another lull of eight years, seven more—Minnesota, Oregon, Kansas, West Virginia, Nevada, Nebraska and Colorado—followed one another. Colorado was called "the Centennial State" because it was admitted in 1876. There were now, at the end of the first hundred years of our history, thirty-eight States in the Union.

It was because there were so many star-circle flags on the Northern side in the Civil War that the Confederates were forced to withdraw their first ensign, which they had made like Washington's, some having thirteen stars in a ring; for this they substituted "the Southern Cross" as a battle flag because, in the smoke of action, the Northern and Southern star-circles could not easily be distinguished.

Although uniformity in the star arrangement had been avoided rather than cultivated, the making of flags by machinery tended to similarity in the setting, most of them equally spaced and in straight rows, level with the stripes of the largest flags, yet one made for the Centennial Exposition, and still exhibited in Philadelphia, shows a large circle with stars grouped inside and others scattered outside of it.

FOR thirteen years after the Centennial not a star was added to the canton of the flag, then six new States—North and South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho and Wyoming—were admitted in 1889 and 1890. Six years later Utah came in after a long delay because of polygamy in that territory, and eleven years after that Oklahoma was admitted to statehood. In 1912, by the admission of New Mexico and Arizona, the number of stars was increased to forty-eight—set in rows of eight stars each and filling the blue field so that not another star can be added without a radical change in the grouping.

As the size, shape and proportions of the canton have been fixed by orders from the War and Navy Departments, the addition of another row in the union would mean the making of the stars still smaller. If this were done they would soon lose their strength and character, as with the stripes, if their number had been increased to forty-eight. Since this limitation has been anticipated for generations, hundreds of designs have been sent in to obviate the difficulty which reached the crisis in 1912. Many so-called solutions are fantastic reminders of the rattlesnake flags before the Revolution. Others have been more reasonable, but they would have been practicable only for a short period. One method was known as "staggering" the stars—placing them zigzag instead of in straight rows as now—but this seemed to the authorities neither



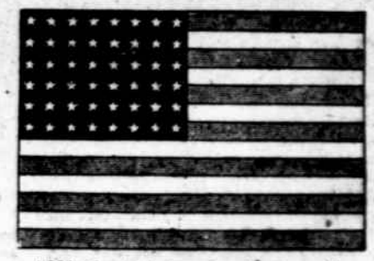
The popular flag of the War of 1812, with fifteen stripes, as used from 1795 to 1820

symmetrical nor enduring. Another theory was to scatter the stars in the blue "like the stars in the sky," but, while this sounded plausible, the effect of celestial constellations could not be gained by it because of lack of space and the different sizes of the stars of heaven. Instead of getting the effect of the heavens at night, it looked like a large number of white paper stars, all the same size, spilled on a blue cloth.

The arrangement, now unanimously approved by authorities and experts, was presented in the White House on Flag Day, 1909. The officials in the War and Navy Departments were so pleased with this design because of its symmetry, heraldic consistency and for the reason that it crystallizes and illustrates the history of the country in the flag, that the official opinions and the implied sanction of the Government enabled it to be exploited as the "Flag of the Future" and various manufacturers were thus encouraged to make and sell it.

For years it has been recognized in the departments at Washington as the approved and accepted arrangement pending official action. Two attorneys general and a secretary of war have investigated the matter and rendered their opinion that this arrangement of the stars is in accord with the requirements of the act of 1818, and that the proper mode of adopting any design should be by executive order of the President of the United States.

THE Nation is now standing in the doorway of a new epoch. Hawaii, one of the several territories, has nearly enough



"Old Glory" today, showing how the country's growth and progress have made a change in the setting of the stars inevitable in the more or less distant future

population, such as it is, to be entitled to admission to the Union.

There are several States also that are becoming unwieldy through their great extent and diversity of interests. In time these will be forced to divide somewhat as Virginia and Dakota did.

And so our history has been crystallized in the "Flag of the Future" which might as well be named the "Flag of the Past," since it embodies the flag of Washington, amplified through the War of 1812.

This arrangement has been regarded with favor by experts and authorities in three Administrations. It has been looked upon with approval by millions of people, both North and South, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It has figured in presidential inaugurations and has been sold in all parts of the United States with the silent sanction of the Government. It has been considered and approved by the joint board of the Army and Navy Departments, which was so favorable to its adoption a year ago that the writer was asked by high officials in the White House to interpret the deep and high meaning of the Nation's ensign which has been evolved from the design of Washington down to the present and on through all the ages of the future.

Junk Pile? Not for the Old Empire State Locomotive! She's Still on Duty

By Charles W. Duke

"You may break, you may shatter, the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will cling to it still." —Tom Moore.

ALL aboard, sons and daughters of Romance! If your blood tingles at the sight of the Midnight Express sweeping through the dark, skimming the rails with a swish and a roar, gather close. If you never knew that a locomotive has a soul read here the story of old "999," aged in point of years, but possessed of the imperishable spirit of youth that refuses to grow old or die.

Dost remember the old "999"? In her youth she was the most famous engine that ever drew a railway train. Nearly thirty years ago she was drawing the Empire State Express from New York City to Buffalo, covering the 439 miles in eight hours, with stops at Albany, Utica, Syracuse and Rochester. Everybody knew about the "999." The "old girl's" picture was in every roundhouse, in every caboose, over the desk of nearly ever master mechanic in the country.

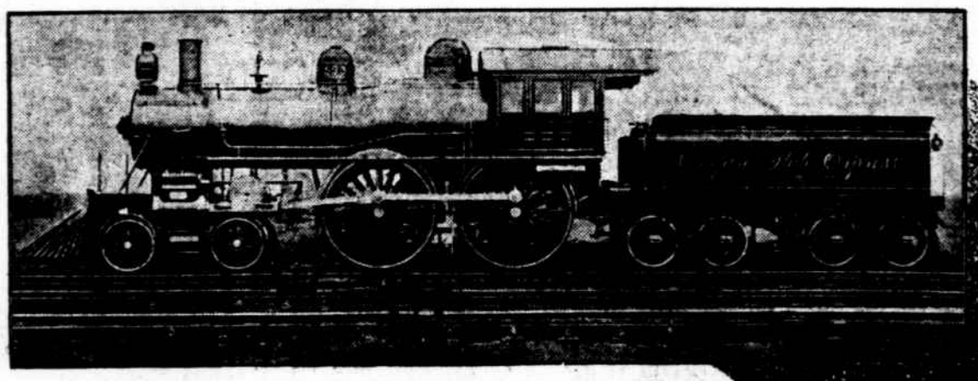
The years have come and gone as the years will come and go, and "999" had almost slipped our memory, until the other day we happened to read something about the famous old engine. It was a report from Utica, N. Y., that our beloved "999" of our youth had gone to the scrap heap. Grand old speed queen that steamed proudly out to the World's Fair in Chicago to be acclaimed a champion now reduced to scrap iron!

But wait. Our interest in the once mighty "999" prompted us to make a little investigation. To the headquarters of the New York Central and Hudson River Railway Co., in the Grand Central Terminal, New York, we directed a query: "Is it true that old '999' has gone to the boneyard where sleep the once proud mistresses of yesteryear?"

Imagine our joy when the reply came back: "Old '999' is still in service." Consider our overflowing joy when we were told further that this same old engine, her number changed, was actually serving back there in our own home town in central Pennsylvania! Can you beat it?

Our own home town is Jersey Shore, a town of 7000, ten miles north of the city of Williamsport. It is the southern terminal of the Pennsylvania division of the New York Central. From the town of our youth a single-track railroad famous as the old Beech Creek Railroad radiates out through the Clearfield county bituminous coal region. It was over this very line of road, mind you, that the old "999" now travels every day of her life—OUR railroad.

Think how the mighty have fallen! Once the proud leader of the vaunted Empire State Express; now a pathetic old figure laboring up the grades of a single-track coal mountain road!



The grand old veteran "999" that drew the Empire State Express in 1893 and startled the world with a new speed record of 112.5 miles an hour. In her day "999" was queen of them all

Up there in Jersey Shore we found the old "999." She was ready for the day's journey up the winding Beech Creek into Clearfield and Patton, a run of about 120 miles. Did you ever hear of the Beech Creek? It has curves and grades and then more curves and grades. In the days when Teddy Roosevelt was organizing his famous Rough Riders for the Spanish-American War they used to say that any chap who had ever worked on the Beech Creek was qualified for a place in the front ranks of the "Rough Riders."

How the "999" has changed! Her old number has disappeared altogether. Now she is known as the "1086." It was twenty-nine years ago that the Empire State Express made its first western trip from New York to Buffalo. The "999" came from the West Albany shops of the New York Central in 1893.

What a shout went up in 1893 when old "999," with a few preliminary trial heats, picked up her Empire State Express and peeled off a new speed record of 112.5 miles an hour. In our railroad town the news created a sensation.

But look at the "999"—now the "1086"—as we saw her the other day ready for a trip up the Beech Creek!

"What's the best speed she can do now?" we asked "The Little Fellow" up in the cab window. By "The Little Fellow" we mean the engineer of the "1086." He is such a little shaver of an engineer, silver-topped in service, rugged and brown from long days and nights of service. They can tuck him away in the locomotive's headlight.

"I reckon she can do about sixty miles an hour when we give her the go," smiled back "The Little Fellow."

Our eyes wandered up over the profile of the dethroned champion.

"About how many years' service do you suppose she still has in her old bones?" we inquired, recalling Dame Rumor's report that "999" was on her way to the boneyard.

"Well, our master mechanic, C. P. Diehr, says she's good for ten or twelve years' more service," replied "The Little Fellow." And in a moment he added: "You can't kill this old gal—she's got a lot of kick in her yet. She's a proud old engine—too proud to die."

The little engineer climbed down from the cab and told us how the "999"—or the "1086"—goes singing on her way every day. Taking the ups and downs of life with the same spirit she possessed in the days of her youth. Once in a while she may falter, but always the "1086" delivers her passengers at the other end of the line.

"Has she figured in any bad wrecks or smashups? Has she killed anybody since she came to the Beech Creek?" we again addressed the engineer.

"No, sir," he replied emphatically. "I would have you know there is no better behaved locomotive in all the world. As docile as a lamb; as patient as an ox; as faithful as a dog—that's the old '999.'"

There was genuine admiration in the eyes of "The Little Fellow." Removing a grimy glove, he bestowed an affectionate pat on the side of the locomotive tender. Only a railroad boy reared in a railroad town can know as we do the engineer's affection for his pet.

"About how much of a load can she haul?" was asked.

"Well, it all depends on the grade," came the answer. "About four passenger cars is her limit on the Beech Creek. Out on the level she can take care of eight or ten coaches."

"And does she grunt and puff or ever lie down on you?"

"Never complains, my boy. Handle her properly and she responds without a murmur. I tell you, this is a human engine. Think of her glorious past! She has something to live for."

Our interest in the "999" is more than an ordinary regard for a pile of iron and steel. Ours is a sentimental affection for the veteran engine born out of an intimate relationship with the once proud speed champion. For not the least surprising feature of our visit to our old home town—Jersey Shore—to have a look at the famous locomotive was the revelation that the engineer who caresses the throttle of the "999"—the "Little Fellow" we have referred to above—is none other than our own dad!

The 1921 model of railway locomotive—the massive steed of iron and steel representing the ultimate in modern engine building. This is the famous Empire State Express of today